

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /070 W
-----200919Z 099014 /23

R 200848Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9145
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL BELFAST

UNCLAS DUBLIN 1145

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT EI
SUBJECT: RUNUP TO ELECTION

1. THE DATE OF THE IRISH ELECTION IS STILL A MYSTERY, BUT ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT IT WILL BE EITHER JUNE 16-17 OR JUNE 23-24. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS THE GOVERNING COALITION (FINE GAEL AND LABOR) HAVE NOMINATED THEIR CANDIDATES AND THE CANDIDATES ARE ALREADY CAMPAIGNING VIGOROUSLY. OPPOSITION FIANNA FAIL STILL HAS A NUMBER OF HOLES TO PLUG IN ITS SLATE AND SEEMS TO BE HAVING A SLOW AND AWKWARD START ON ITS CAMPAIGN. THE DECISION TO DISSOLVE THE PARLIAMENT RESTS ENTIRELY WITH THE PRIME MINISTER (TAOISEACH), LIAM COSGRAVE, AND IN TYPICAL FASHION HE HAS NOT REVEALED ANY INTENTIONS.

2. THE CABINET IS OUT FRENETICALLY OPENING SCHOOLS, ANNOUNCING NEW INDUSTRIES (JOBS), AND MAKING SPEECHES ON ANY AND ALL SUBJECTS. WE RECEIVED FIFTEEN GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASES YESTERDAY AND ELEVEN TODAY GIVING THE TEXTS OF THESE GREAT EVENTS. WHILE THE TRADITIONAL ELECTION MANIFESTOS HAVE NOT YET BEEN PUBLISHED, THE

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COALITION PLATFORM IS MAINLY BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:

- ECONOMIC RECOVERY IS WELL IN HAND, AND THE RATE OF INFLATION IS DROPPING.
- EMPLOYMENT SHOWS SIGNS OF IMPROVING.

- GOOD GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT HAS BROUGHT IRELAND RELATIVELY UNSCATHED THROUGH THE RECESSION CAUSED ENTIRELY BY OUTSIDE FACTORS.
- THE TOUGH LAW-AND-ORDER ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST TERRORISTS HAS PREVENTED ANY TERRORIST PROBLEM IN THE REPUBLIC (WITH THIS GOES COMMENT ABOUT THE "SOFT" OR "AMBIVALENT" ATTITUDE OF THE OPPOSITION TOWARD THE IRA).

3. THE OPPOSITION HAS YET TO COME UP WITH A COHERENT ELECTION PROGRAM, THOUGH IT HAS SCORED POINTS WITH:

- UNDER THE COALITION UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION HAVE REACHED LEVELS UNKNOWN SINCE THE 1930'S.
- THE COALITION IS A MISMATCHED SET TRYING TO INCORPORATE SOCIALISM AND CONSERVATISM, WHICH ONLY PRODUCES STALEMATE AND A DO-NOTHING GOVERNMENT.
- IRELAND HAS GAINED LITTLE FROM ITS EC MEMBERSHIP BECAUSE OF SUPINE GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE IN THE EC COUNCILS.

4. BECAUSE OF IRELAND'S COMPLICATED PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM POLLS HAVE BEEN RATHER INADEQUATE IN PREDICTING ELECTION OUTCOMES. HOWEVER, WHAT POLLS ARE AVAILABLE, AND OUR SOUNDINGS OF MANY LEVELS OF UNCLASSIFIED

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POLITICAL OPINION, INDICATE THAT THE COALITION IS A STRONG FAVORITE TO WIN THE ELECTION, WITH PERHAPS A FOUR OR FIVE SEAT MAJORITY (QUITE LARGE BY IRISH STANDARDS). HOWEVER, THERE ARE SUFFICIENT IMPONDERABLES TO HEDGE OUR BETS. ONE OF THE BIG IMPONDERABLES IS THE YOUTH VOTE. THIS IS THE FIRST GENERAL ELECTION WITH 18-21-YEAR OLD VOTERS. FIANNA FAIL HAS BEEN WORKING PARTICULARLY HARD TO ORGANIZE THE YOUTH VOTE, AND IF THEY GET A GOOD TURNOUT FROM THIS SECTOR, A NUMBER OF CLOSE CONSTITUENCIES COULD SWING. ANOTHER IMPORTANT SWING FACTOR COULD BE THE FARM VOTE. DESPITE THE BRILLIANT AND HERCULEAN EFFORTS OF THE POPULAR FARM MINISTER, MARK CLINTON, THERE IS A SULLEN SUSPICION AMONG THE FARMERS THAT THE COALITION IS WAITING TO POUNCE ON THEM WITH INCREASED TAXES AFTER THE ELECTION. A THIRD IMPONDERABLE IS THE SHAKY LABOR PARTY, WHICH CANNOT SEEM TO CONTROL ITS INTERNECINE WARFARE AND COULD LOSE A NUMBER OF SEATS BY SPLITTING ITS OWN VOTE.

5. WE EXPECT AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY COSGRAVE EITHER DURING THE UPCOMING FINE GAEL ARD FHEIS (MAY 20-22) OR SHORTLY THEREAFTER. THE TRADITION IN IRELAND IS FOR A VERY SHORT (3-4 WEEKS) ACTUAL ELECTION PERIOD. WE WILL BE SENDING A SEPTTEL ON IMPLICATIONS FOR USG POLICY OF THIS ELECTION. RENDAHL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770537/aaaabfky.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a332408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2441807
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RUNUP TO ELECTION
TAGS: PINT, EI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a332408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009